

NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF GOV. MIKE HUCKABEE
STATE OF ARKANSAS
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Rex Nelson, Director of Communications
(501) 682-3606 Fax: (501) 682-2614
Jim Harris, Director of Press Operations
(501) 682-3508 Fax: (501) 682-2614

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Little Rock -- March 16 -- Gov. Mike Huckabee on Wednesday announced an initiative designed to encourage healthier dining. The initiative is part of the governor's Healthy Arkansas program.

Huckabee said the Healthy Arkansas restaurant award program will give awards annually to Arkansas restaurants that offer healthy menu items and dining environments. The state Department of Health and the Arkansas Hospitality Association will partner with the governor's office to operate the program.

"We must encourage people to adopt healthier habits rather than legislating change," Huckabee said. "One thing we can do is make it easy for Arkansans to identify restaurants that are working to make us healthier."

Any restaurant may apply. An unlimited number of awards may be given. There will be three levels of recognition -- gold, silver and bronze. A restaurant must have a smoke-free environment to reach the gold level.

Restaurants with smoking sections will be eligible for the silver level if they have designated non-smoking sections that are separated from the smoking sections and have separate ventilation systems.

Restaurants at the bronze level must have designated non-smoking sections

separated from the smoking sections.

Additional criteria are related to menu choices and the nutritional information that's provided to customers. Restaurants can earn points by offering fruit choices with no sugar added, by offering low-fat or fat-free salad dressings and by allowing substitutions or choices of non-fried fruits and vegetables with entrees.

Huckabee made Wednesday afternoon's announcement at the Sufficient Grounds location near the state Capitol. Sufficient Grounds is a smoke-free establishment. The governor was joined by Dr. Fay Boozman, the director of the state Department of Health. The Sufficient Grounds owners, Adam Frith and John Newbern, provided tips on preparing healthy menu items. The manager of the Sufficient Grounds location near the Capitol is Merritt Machen.

Applications for the restaurant awards are available online at www.healthyarkansas.com. Applications also may be requested by calling the Health Department at 1-800-235-0002. The application deadline is April 29.

Winning restaurants will be given materials such as Healthy Arkansas menu stickers, door decals and table tents.

"Ours is an industry of choice," said Montine McNulty, the executive director of the Arkansas Hospitality Association. "When restaurants give consumers more choices, it's good for everyone."

McNulty thanked the governor for establishing the program. She said the National Restaurant Association is developing a similar program but has yet to launch it.

"Arkansas is ahead of the national curve," McNulty said.